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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0325  
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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0256  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0093  
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SUBJECT: DALAI LAMA SPEAKS IN KOLKATA ON TIBETAN AUTONOMY

¶1. (SBU) On January 15 in Kolkata, the Dalai Lama spoke at the 40th anniversary celebrations of the of non-governmental organization Young Men's Welfare Society (YMWS). He made remarks on "Ethics in Human Development." During the question and answer period following his remarks, the Dalai Lama responded to a question asking what he thought would be Tibet's future. While not directly answering the question, the Dalai Lama identified three key issues related to Tibet and its treatment by China: a pattern of "cultural cleansing," environmental damage caused by China's push for rapid economic development and Tibet's lost role as a buffer state between India and China. His key message was that he accepted Tibet as part of China but with true autonomy as provided for under the Chinese constitution and as a demilitarized region.

¶2. (SBU) Cultural Cleansing: The Dalai Lama started his response noting that Lhasa has a population of approximately 300,000 people but only 100,000 are Tibetans; 200,000 are Chinese and the Chinese control most of the business and key positions. He said that the new railroad link and China's other efforts to develop infrastructure in Tibet will result in Tibet further being overrun by the Chinese and described this process as "Cultural Cleansing" or even a form of "Cultural Genocide." He said that the Chinese constitution allows for regional autonomy but in practice the Chinese seek to undermine the cultural integrity and autonomy of regions by flooding those areas with Chinese. He also noted that in Inner Mongolia, the 5 million Mongolians were being swamped by 18 million Chinese. He accepted Tibet being part of China but with the status of true autonomy and cultural integrity under China's constitution.

¶3. (SBU) Environmental Damage: The Dalai Lama commented that Chinese engineers have discussed the possibility of redirecting water from the Brahmaputra and "Sindhu" (Indus) Rivers for Southwest China. He said that would have a serious impact on India's environment and the entire Himalayan region. (Note: Media reported similar statements in 2006 but the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied the claims.)

¶4. (SBU) Tibet As A Buffer State: The Dalai Lama said that prior to 1950, India did not need to position troops on the border with Tibet. With Tibet's occupation by China, the border now has a strong military presence and India has had to expend significant money, personnel and resources to man the inhospitable Himalayan areas. He believed that India should push to demilitarize Tibet to relieve the burden of maintaining the military on the border. He said good relations between India and China were important for Asia but the relationship had to be based on genuine friendship and mutual trust, which would not be possible with large contingents of soldiers on both sides of the border. If Tibet were demilitarized, then there truly could be "Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai."

¶5. (U) This message was cleared with AmEmbassy Beijing.

JARDINE